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Pipelandia
Oil tanker spills and the 'Titanic Mentality'
metroNEWS

COURTESY MEIGHAN MAKARCHUK/VANCOUVER AQUARIUM

DEATHS UNEXPLAINED

Vancouver Aquarium contact police after two beluga whales die within 10 days metroNEWS

Rent increase the highest ever

HOUSING CRISIS

Vacancy rates tighten across Metro Van, zero in Delta

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

In 2016, rents in Metro Vancouver increased by 6.4 per cent — the steepest rise ever tracked by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Rent rates normally increase at about the same rate as British Columbia's provincially regulated cap on yearly rent increases, which is currently 2.9 per cent.

But last year, rents rose 3.9 per cent, outstripping the rent cap. That trend has continued in 2016, said Robyn Adamache, principal market analyst for CMHC.

"2008 was the last time we had an increase in rents of more than 4 per cent, and that's when the vacancy rate was 0.5 per cent," Adamache said. The 6.4 per cent increase between 2015 and 2016 is "the highest I'm seeing back to 1992." The highest rent increase in the region was in the City of Vancouver, at 7 per cent.

CMHC's survey confirms what other analysts tracked earlier this year by collecting Craigslist rental listings: in 2016, Vancouver rents shot up, mirroring the steep increase seen in house and condo prices between 2015 and 2016. Craigslist data shows that in April, the average one-bedroom on the site was listed for $1,500; by November, that had risen to $1,800, a 16 per cent increase over just eight months.

> 2008 was the last time we had an increase in rents more than 4%.
> Robyn Adamache

CMHC's October 2016 survey shows that vacancy rates, already very low across Metro Vancouver, tightened further in most municipalities. The vacancy rate eased slightly for Vancouver, Richmond and the Tri-Cities, but worsened in all other Metro Vancouver municipalities. In Delta and in the UBC Endowment Lands, the rental vacancy rate fell to zero.

According to CMHC, the average price of a one-bedroom apartment in the City of Vancouver is now $1,268, compared to $1,175 in 2015, while the average price of a two-bedroom is $1,757, compared to $1,643.

After many years of little new rental supply, the past four years has seen steady growth in the number of new purpose-built rental buildings, with 2016 setting a record. New construction added 922 units, but 90 per cent of those were built in the City of Vancouver, Adamache said.

Metro Vancouver has seen both strong employment and population growth, trends that are expected to continue.

The vacancy rate in the condo rental market is even lower than in the purpose-built market, falling to just 0.3 per cent in 2016 from 0.9 per cent in 2015. While 5,000 new condo rentals are usually added every year, in 2016 only 1,000 new rentals came on the market.

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

Dictionary.com's word of the year is darkly appropriate. **World**

PIPELANDIA

Tankers test 'Titanic mentality'

As the federal decision on Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline looms, Metro asks if B.C.'s 'five conditions' are met. Today, we look at oil tankers.

DAVID P. BALL/METRO

Capt. Chris Badger first went to sea in 1973.

Since then, the Master Mariner has seen oil tankers grow dramatically in size.

And they could be more frequent here if the federal government approves Kinder Morgan's proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion by Dec. 19.

The proposal would increase oil tanker traffic through the Burrard Inlet seven-fold. In 2012, Premier Christy Clark announced any pipeline would need to satisfy five conditions (see sidebar), the second being "world-leading" marine spill response.

The spectre of a tanker accident has galvanized opposition to the project, despite Trans Mountain's assurances the risks are low — it projects one major spill in more than 2,000 years.

Critics say it's more than 80 per cent likely over 50 years.

Badger, Port of Vancouver's former chief operating officer, remembers when the Exxon Valdez ran aground in 1989, spilling more than 40 million litres of oil into Alaskan waters.

Since retiring, he's consulted for Trans Mountain and argues new double-hulled ships and Kinder Morgan's promise to ensure tankers are tethered to multiple tug boats through the inlet and escorted to open ocean, make an accident "highly improbable."

"There's not been one single spill from double-hulled tanker since 1990."

Yet a City of Vancouver-commissioned report from York University disaster and emergency management professor David Etkin warns of a "Titanic mentality," or failure to anticipate unpredictable risks of "low probability, high consequence events."

"Unfortunately, there is a long history of catastrophes that were considered to be so implausible that they were not properly planned for," he wrote.

B.C. Premier Christy Clark said the federal government's recent $1.5-billion Coast Guard funding announcement addressed many shortfalls but more is needed.

"The most important element of this is making sure that our coast is protected from a catastrophic spill," Clark said Monday. "That's going to be the area where the Prime Minister is going to have to put most of his focus to convince British Columbians, if he decides to approve it, that they've met our expectations."

The federal cash only gets B.C. up to standard for current shipping traffic, not including Kinder Morgan's proposed increases.

Nor does it account for the risk of diluted bitumen, or dilbit.

"There's no technology to recover dilbit that's sunk below the surface," said Georgia Strait Alliance's Alexandra Woodworth.

"No matter what kind of money the province and feds want to throw at this problem, there is no way to get there."

A climate-change activist kayaks in front of an oil tanker in May 2016 in Burrard Inlet near Trans Mountain's Westridge Marine Terminal. DEVYN BRUGGE/CONTRIBUTED **Inset: Master Mariner Capt. Chris Badger, former chief operating officer of the Port of Vancouver, stands on a dock near his home on Vancouver Island.** TRANS MOUNTAIN/CONTRIBUTED

ABOUT THIS SERIES

In July 2012, after protests against another proposal — Enbridge Northern Gateway — B.C. Premier Christy Clark announced any heavy oil pipeline would have to meet five requirements to gain the province's backing:

MONDAY 1. Complete environmental review process
TUESDAY 2. Safeguard B.C. coast with "world-leading" marine oil spill measures
WEDNESDAY 3. Reduce and manage risk of oil spill from pipeline over land
THURSDAY 4. Address legal obligations to aboriginal and treaty rights, and indigenous benefits
FRIDAY 5. B.C. gets "fair share" of economic benefits, reflecting "risk borne" by taxpayers and environment

FEEDBACK

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No one will rest until we find answers, head vet promises

BELUGA INVESTIGATION

Aquarium looks at toxins, other causes in wake of second death

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

The Vancouver Aquarium believes a toxin or virus is the most likely culprit in the puzzling deaths of two beluga whales but is not ruling anything out, including intentional poisoning.

Aurora, a 29-year old beluga whale, died Friday, only 10 days after her daughter, Qila, 21, passed away with similar symptoms.

"With those whales exhibiting the same clinical signs, exhibiting the same laboratory results, we have to assume that the deaths are related," said the aquarium's head veterinarian, Dr. Martin Haulena.

Saturday's necropsy on Aurora's body revealed the whale had a "dramatically compromised" liver but did not yield any clear answers on what caused it, he told reporters.

"I will not rest until we find some answers. That's a promise. And neither will anyone else around here. We loved those whales and we tried incredibly hard. I am very proud of our team."

Aurora died Friday at Vancouver Aquarium, 10 days after her daughter Qila passed away. NEIL FISHER/COURTESY VANCOUVER AQUARIUM

The medical team is considering a number of reasons, including "everything from biotoxins to organic or inorganic toxins, right up to possibly introduced toxins," said Haulena.

Vancouver Aquarium CEO Dr. John Nightingale confirmed he is in contact with police about the possibility that the whales' deaths were the result of a criminal act.

"We've had the break-in at marine mammal rescue, we've had social media trolls harassing and systematically and in a programmed way harassing some of our staff," he said.

"Then of course, the two so far unexplained deaths."

The non-profit's Marine Mammal Rescue Centre, was broken into the same week as Qila's death. Staff are reviewing security footage of the pool minute by minute and conducting a complete review of the belugas' food.

The aquarium has also hired a panel of medical professionals, both from the veterinary and human side, to investigate the cause of death, according to Nightingale.

Until cause of death is determined, no marine mammals, including the five belugas on loan to other aquariums, will move into the tank where Aurora and Qila used to live, he confirmed.

But design work for an expansion of the tank, located in the aquarium's arctic exhibit, will continue, he said.

There are currently three cetaceans left in the aquarium's care, including a false killer whale, a harbour porpoise and a white-sided dolphin.

But critics like the Vancouver Humane Society say the passing of the two belugas show it is time for the aquarium to stop keeping cetaceans in captivity.

Nightingale had some pointed words for them.

> **Almost everything that is known about beluga hearing was learned here.**
> Dr. John Nightingale

"Almost everything that is known about beluga hearing was learned in this aquarium with those whales in that exhibit," he said.

"Advanced life-saving skills that come from taking care of these animals is what led us to run our marine mammal rescue program, the only one in Canada."

Vancouver Park Board chairwoman Sarah Kirby-Yung has said she wants to see a plebiscite on the issue — one that was initially sparked by the 2013 documentary about orca captivity, Blackfish.

The average lifespan of a beluga is 15 years, according to Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

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$23 million pledged for new campsites

CAMPING

Plan response to residents' reservation woes: Premier

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

Securing a campsite in British Columbia may not be such a wild experience next year.

Following a contentious summer that saw campsite reservations became a hot-button political issue, Premier Christy Clark announced Monday $23 million in funding for a new BC Parks Future Strategy, which includes the creation of more than 1,900 new campsites.

Clark hopes the plan will help alleviate the frustrations felt by many who were unable to reserve a site last summer for their families. The increased supply should also cut down on abuse of the system.

One of the stories that thrust campsites into the political realm involved scalpers booking up the limited number of sites available and auctioning them off to the highest bidders.

Legislative changes were made to cut down on the practice, but the lack of campsites and rising cost of camping remain issues for families.

"In the last year, we had a terrible problem of people not being able to make reservations of their own campsites in their own province," said Clark. "We want to try to address that by adding more campsites. So we want to start with the high demand areas, which is where we will begin. It's about making sure that British Columbians have more ways to experience nature."

B.C. Premier Christy Clark meets with park rangers. CONTRIBUTED

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IMMIGRATION

Law student seeks justice for himself

A man who spent more than two years in a British Columbia church to avoid deportation from Canada on alleged terrorism links is asking the Federal Court to clear his name.

Jose Figueroa will be in court Wednesday in Vancouver asking it to rescind an eight-year-old report that said he was inadmissible to Canada due to his past membership in a political organization.

Before he fled to Canada in 1997 to escape death threats, Figueroa was a volunteer for the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front in El Salvador. The group brought in a new era of democracy when it was voted into power in 2009.

He also said Monday he wants a federal deportation order quashed.

Immigration Minister John McCallum granted a ministerial exemption last December that allowed Figueroa to leave the Walnut Grove Lutheran Church in Langley.

"If there is justice in this country, the Canada Border Services Agency should be found accountable for the harm that they have done to me, to my family," Figueroa told a news conference outside the University of Victoria's law faculty building.

Figueroa, who is studying law at the university, said he is now a permanent resident of Canada but wants the border services agency to erase the report on his inadmissibility and deportation orders.

"My application for permanent residency was finalized on May 12, 2016," he said. "When you are looking at the time span when the application was approved in principle in 2004, it took 14 years for immigration to actually finalize that application. That is unreasonable. My name has been tarnished by an allegation that is unfounded."

The border services agency could not immediately be reached for comment.

Figueroa said he has never been a terrorist, but was a member of a university student union in El Salvador that supported the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, which opposed the country's right-wing dictatorship in the 1980s.

"I am not a terrorist," he said. "The FLMN is not a terrorist organization. At this point we are looking for the CBSA, the Canadian government to acknowledge my rights have been violated."

Figueroa arrived in Canada in 1997 with his wife and claimed refugee status, but 13 years and three Canadian-born children later, the federal government sought his deportation.

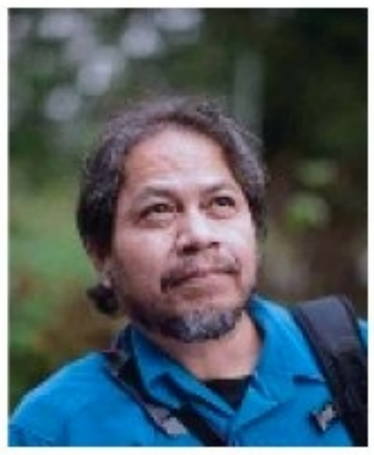
He said the immigration battle and especially his time at the church took its toll on him and his family. He said his wife lost one of her kidneys the year before he sought sanctuary at the church, and he missed his son's graduation ceremony while he was staying there.

His petition to the federal court for a judicial review doesn't mention a damage award.

Figueroa, who is representing himself in court, said he isn't concerned about financial compensation.

"I'm for justice," he said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Sanctuary-seeker Jose Figueroa, who was labelled a terrorist by Canadian Border Services. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Justin Trudeau speaks at a news conference in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on Sunday. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trudeau to skip Castro memorials

POLITICS

PM has taken heat for praise of late Cuban dictator

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office says he won't be attending any memorial or funeral services for the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro, saying his schedule wouldn't allow him to attend.

Instead, Trudeau has dispatched Governor-General David Johnston to attend a memorial service scheduled to take place Tuesday in Havana. The PMO would not say if any other representatives would attend memorial services or Castro's funeral.

Trudeau's decision follows harsh criticism at home and abroad for a laudatory statement issued on the weekend that praised the dictator's legacy.

Trudeau's statement expressed "deep sorrow" about the death of Castro, 90, without mentioning the human rights violations of his regime beyond referring vaguely to him as "a controversial figure." Trudeau also described Castro as a "legendary revolutionary and orator" who made significant improvements to the education and health-care systems of Cuba.

Trudeau defended his statement by saying he was trying to highlight the connections between Canada and Cuba.

The Opposition Conservatives took Trudeau to task Monday in the House of Commons, urging him to amend his written statement after agreeing in a news conference Sunday that Castro was a dictator.

The Tories demanded Trudeau apologize for trying to whitewash Castro's past.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Senate cautions against Africa peacekeeping

A new report is raising serious questions about the risks of deploying Canadian military and police officers to a UN peace operation in Africa, recommending Parliament should have a say on whether it proceeds.

The report issued Monday by the Senate standing committee on national security and defence says the government should seek approval for a deployment of personnel, and only after the government reveals the anticipated cost, the rules of engagement for how Canadian soldiers will defend themselves, the impact on current military operations, a timetable for when a mission would end, and a clear plan for how soldiers would be counselled after returning.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Air Force pilot dies in fighter jet crash

The pilot of a CF-18 fighter jet that crashed near the Alberta-Saskatchewan border has died.

The Air Force said the single-seat fighter was based out of Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake in northeastern Alberta and went down Monday morning on the Saskatchewan side of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range. The range covers almost 30,000 square kilometres across the two provinces.

The pilot was not identified pending notification of next of kin.

Speaking in Ottawa, Air Force commander Lt.-Gen. Michael Hood said the plane crashed during a routine training mission by 401 Squadron, one of two CF-18 squadrons at the Cold Lake base. The base is the busiest fighter base in the country and provides fighter pilot training for all Canadian Forces pilots.

> **It's a very, very sad day for the RCAF.**
> Lt.-Gen. Michael Hood

"It's a very, very sad day for the RCAF and our hearts go out to the family of our fallen member," Hood said. "More details will be forthcoming. It's just a reminder of the dangerous work that we ask the men and women of our air force and our armed forces to do every day."

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan said he couldn't speculate on what caused the crash. A flight safety investigation is to look into what went wrong.

"It's too preliminary to make any type of judgement or conclusions," Sajjan said.

"The best thing we can do right now is give the Air Force and the Canadian Armed Forces the space to do the necessary work and then we will have more to say about that."

Conservative Opposition Leader Rona Ambrose, along with defence critics, also offered condolences.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Sex-assault poll disturbs

MILITARY

Critical survey shows nearly 1,000 reports in just one year

Nearly 1,000 members of Canada's military say they've been sexually assaulted in the past year, according to a landmark survey.

Women in Canada's military remain the target of sexual assaults, unwanted sexual touching, inappropriate sexual innuendo and jokes, according to the newly released survey that reveals top commanders have much work left to improve the culture within the Canadian Armed Forces.

One in 60 regular force members say they've been sexually assaulted in the last year, mostly unwanted sexual touching, but also including attacks and sexual activity without consent.

That works out to about 1.7 per cent of regular forces personnel, higher than the comparable rate of 0.9 per cent for the general population.

Gen. Jonathan Vance addresses the findings of a Statistics Canada Survey on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

New statistics released Monday show that women are often the target of misconduct and are four times more likely than men to be assaulted.

In an especially disturbing revelation, almost one-third of women in uniform say they've been the victim of a sexual assault since they enlisted.

The grim stats are part of a landmark survey by Statistics Canada commissioned by the military to undercover the extent of inappropriate conduct in the ranks.

Some 43,000 military members responded to the voluntary survey between April and June and the findings will serve as a benchmark in what promises to be a regular survey to keep tabs on the problems.

Gen. Jonathan Vance, the chief of defence staff, said Monday the findings confirm his decision to launch OP Honour, the military-wide initiative to stamp out misconduct and improve workplace culture, as one of his first acts upon taking command in July, 2015.

But especially troubling for Vance and his top commanders, is that inappropriate behaviour has continued after the launch of that effort.

Vance renewed his pledge that the military will seek out perpetrators. He said that 30 supervisors and higher rank members have been removed from their command because of misconduct and Vance bluntly said they wouldn't be missed if they left the military entirely.

Vance said he was buoyed by the finding that almost 80 per cent regular force members strongly agreed that complaints about inappropriate sexual behaviour would be taken seriously in their current unit.

But he agreed that more work needs to be done to encourage the victims of sexual assault and misbehaviour to report incidents to their superiors or the police.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

DEMOCRACY

Canadians ho-hum on electoral reform

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

Canadians are open to the idea of electoral reform, but in no rush to see actual change in the way they cast their votes, according to a new Angus Reid Institute poll.

About 72 per cent of respondents said they believe an electoral system that better reflects popular support would increase voter turnout, but only 37 per cent said they are in support of actually changing the system.

"There is some openness, some acknowledgement of the potential benefits of changing, but that doesn't exactly equal a wholesale national call for electoral reform," explained Shachi Kurl, executive director of the Angus Reid Institute.

That hesitancy may have something to do with how complicated electoral reform can be, she added.

DICTIONARY.COM

Word of the year a sign of the times

You might have thought about it, heard it. A lot. You might have even felt it: Dictionary.com's word of the year is "xenophobia."

While it's difficult to get at exactly why people look up words in dictionaries, online or on paper, it's clear that in contentious 2016, fear of "otherness" bruised the collective consciousness around the globe.

The Brexit vote, police violence against people of colour, Syria's refugee crisis, transsexual rights and the rise of Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential race were among prominent developments that drove debate — and spikes in lookups — of the word, said Jane Solomon, one of the site's lexicographers.

The 21-year-old site defines xenophobia as "fear or hatred of foreigners, people from different cultures, or strangers." And it plans to expand its entry to include fear or dislike of "customs, dress and cultures of people with backgrounds different from our own," Solomon said in a recent interview. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Officer hailed for speedy takedown

Officials on Monday praised an Ohio State University police officer who shot and killed a man a minute after the assailant drove his car into a crowd and stabbed multiple people.

Alan Horujko
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY POLICE VIA THE AP

Officer Alan Horujko, who started on the university police force in January 2015, was responding to reports of a nearby gas leak when the car jumped a curb on campus at 9:52 a.m.

Horujko ordered the attacker, Abdul Razak Ali Artan, to drop the knife and then shot him when he didn't obey the command, university president Michael Drake said.

"The officer encountered the individual by 9:53; the subject was neutralized by 9:53," Drake said, underscoring how quickly events unfolded.

Eleven people were hurt in the attack.

Mayor Andrew Ginther called Horujko an "outstanding young law-enforcement officer."

"There has never been a more dangerous or complicated and challenging time to be a police officer," said Ginther.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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JAPAN SOMETHING FISHY An amusement park in Japan sparked an uproar after it displayed about 5,000 dead fish in the ice at a skating rink, forcing the park to close the attraction. About 25 different kinds of fish could be seen under the 250-metre-long ice circuit. The park in of Kitakyushu opened the "Ice Aquarium" as an "attraction never heard about." FACEBOOK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BROADCASTING

CBC asking feds for $400M to go ad-free

The CBC is asking for an increase of roughly $400 million in government funding to go ad-free on all platforms.

A proposal paper posted to the national broadcaster's website outlines how the CBC/Radio-Canada wants to follow the example of the BBC and be fully funded by the federal government instead of partially relying on ad revenue.

The CBC "has always been funded at a per person level that is significantly lower than … almost all other comparable public broadcasters," the paper notes, pointing out that the BBC receives $114 per citizen while the CBC only gets $34.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Tuesday, November 29, 2016

PAUL WELLS ON WHAT CASTRO LEFT BEHIND

Canadians not named Trudeau will probably continue to watch Cuba as we have for decades, unsure or divided in our response.

I want to talk about the rest of Canada's weird, hesitant relationship with Cuba. But first, since I'm just getting to it now, a few words about Justin Trudeau and Fidel Castro.

We haven't seen Justin Trudeau mourn like this since his dad died. In expressing his "deep sorrow" at the death of Castro, a "larger than life" figure whom Trudeau lauded as "a legendary orator."

Sorry, let's just pause right there. Legendary orator? On Sept. 26, 1960, Castro addressed the United Nations General Assembly for four and a half hours, a record unchallenged to this day in the most boring room on Earth. In 1998 in Havana he spoke for seven and a half hours. Calling Castro a great orator is like calling porn legend Ron Jeremy a romantic: It confuses volume with quality.

Onward. Trudeau lauded Castro's "tremendous dedication and love for the Cuban people," whose speech and dietary protein Castro rationed, by law, for decades. I guess it was tough love.

To be sure, Trudeau balanced his praise with criticism. "During Castro's rule, thousands of Cubans were incarcerated in abysmal prisons, thousands more were harassed and intimidated, and entire generations were denied basic political freedoms," the prime minister wrote. Just kidding! No, that last quote isn't from Justin Trudeau at all. It's from Human Rights Watch. As for the PM, in a communiqué overflowing with praise for Castro, he could find room for only one word about the Cuban dictator's human-rights record: "controversial."

Probably most Canadians have long known that Cubans don't have the government we would want for them.

Nor can the PM's defenders long sustain the notion that his statement must have been penned by some careless lackey in the PMO. No, the communiqué is too solidly in line with the entire Trudeau family's record on the man to be anything but an honest reflection of Justin Trudeau's thought.

Castro was a pallbearer at Pierre Trudeau's funeral. The PM's brother Alexandre Trudeau wrote in the Toronto Star a decade ago that Castro was "something of a superman," whose "intellect is one of the most broad and complete that can be found." Alexandre Trudeau wrote that he "grew up knowing that Fidel Castro had a special place among my family's friends," even if ordinary Cubans "do occasionally complain, often as an adolescent might complain about a too strict and demanding father."

One notes family similarities in prose style.

So a prime minister who claims to prize evidence-based policy was caught putting family connections ahead of the exhaustively documented abuses of a man whose death marks a crucial step in his own people's long-delayed march toward freedom.

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP Former prime minister Pierre Trudeau looks on as Cuban President Fidel Castro gestures during a visit to a Havana in 1976 THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

But the rest of us — we cold and bashful Canadians — will probably continue to watch Cuba as we have for decades, unsure or divided in our response to events in the land Fidel Castro leaves behind.

Exhibit A in the theatre of ambivalence is Justin Trudeau's predecessor. Stephen Harper met Raul Castro, Fidel's brother and still the president of Cuba, only 19 months ago, attending what would be Harper's last Summit of the Americas in Panama City. The two men sat smiling awkwardly at each other in hard-backed chairs around a little table.

But reporters covering the summit had to find the photo on the website of Granma, the official Cuban Communist newspaper. Canadian reporters weren't told of the meeting by Harper's staff until they found proof of it on the Castro family's propaganda website.

At his summit-closing news conference, Harper said that for Canada and Cuba, "we're at a point where engagement is more likely to lead us to where we want to go than continued isolation." He said he and Raul Castro had discussed the two nations' "important and long-standing relationship. It's a political relationship, a tourist relationship and commercial relationship to some degree — one that we want to expand."

True, Harper managed to resist marvelling at Castro's charm, oratorical skill, grasp of physics or deep-diving skills, further evidence, if any were needed, that he's no Trudeau.

But Harper's meeting with Cuba's president — only three years after he had blocked Cuban participation at the previous Summit of the Americas — was of a piece with his decision to let Canada be the venue for crucial secret meetings between the Castro regime and the Obama administration.

In both cases, Harper was more eager to get along with the Cubans than to be seen getting along with them.

Why advertise the thaw? A million Canadians a year visit Cuba to enjoy gorgeous beaches and groaning buffets at all-inclusive resorts from which most Cubans remain banned. One winter more than a decade ago, I was one of them. But millions more refuse, even today, to make the trip, believing each dollar they spent would help prop up a corrupt regime.

Probably most Canadians not named Trudeau have long known that Cubans did not have the government Canadians would want for them — and, indeed, not the government Cubans would choose, were they granted the freedom to change their minds about the revolution. But that knowledge doesn't tell us which mix of engagement and isolation is wisest.

Having blown some political capital by saying what he thinks, Trudeau is now going to skip Fidel's funeral. It's a retreat to ambivalence dictated by a public outcry that must have astonished the prime minister, who grew up with a photo of Fidel Castro in his family's home and thought, perhaps, that everybody did.

Paul Wells is a national affairs columnist for the Toronto Star.

Another fight for Chinatown's future

CITY HOLLER
Trish Kelly

This past week, a group of 80 Chinatown residents gathered in front of a soon-to-be-opened fine foods shop on Main and East Georgia.

To illustrate their point about what is happening to their neighbourhood, they could have chosen many other backdrops in our historical Chinatown neighbourhood like the vegan pizza place across the street, the six-dollar-per-cone ice cream shop a block east, or the hipster Bratwurst spot down on Pender.

The neighbourhood is still called Chinatown, but it is becoming a lot less visibly Chinese and less friendly to Chinese seniors. New retail is moving in, things are getting more expensive, and neighbourhood staples like green grocers and tea shops are shuttered.

It's got to feel like a terrible burn to the elders of Chinatown, whose families spent the 1960s and '70s fighting city hall's plan for "urban renewal" successfully prevented both the demolition of Strathcona and erection of a freeway that would have cut our city in two. Chinese Canadian residents organized block by block, knocking on doors and talking to neighbours across backyard fences. We owe much gratitude to those folks who saved Strathcona.

And here we go again. Now, the city is in the process of updating its density regulations for the neighbourhood, as part of their efforts to "revitalize" Chinatown.

While it can probably be said city hall is more transparent with residents today, conducting open houses and developing websites, it's perhaps easy to be transparent when it's all but certain most people do not have enough of a grasp of development-speak to understand how such changes will impact day to day life — even in English, let alone translated to Cantonese or Mandarin.

I saw the poster boards the city used at the two open houses they ran in late October, and without a planning degree, I struggled to understand what new zoning designations would mean for Chinatown. As I furrowed my brow and squinted at the new zoning types and height allowances, I think I understood that new developments on Main Street could get as high as 11 stories if they allocate 20 per cent of the units to affordable or seniors housing.

Twenty per cent sounds like better than nothing, but is it enough to stop the waning of Chinatown? Will new Chinatown shops cater to the 20 per cent of residents in these affordable units, or the 80 per cent with the money to buy luxury condos? Will existing Chinese dentists and pharmacies be able to stay for the 20 per cent of seniors lucky enough to get an affordable suite?

Cites change, that is true, but let's make sure revitalization of Chinatown doesn't displace the seniors who already fought once to save it.

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INTERIOR DESIGN

Create a serene mood in your home to get away from it all

Megan Haynes
For Torstar News Service

Cosy like the Danes

• Hygge (HUE-geh or HOO-geh) is all about creating a cosy and comfortable environment

There's no such thing as too many candles, says Arne Nordtorp, a Denmark-born Toronto resident, and Danish design aficionado. Soft lighting is key to any happy home. So are cosy blankets and beautiful furniture.

"A lot of people think Danish design is stark and cold, but when you get to the DNA, it's really warm and colourful," says Nordtorp, who owns the Danish furniture and design store Torp.

"The space itself needs to be beautiful because when you're in a beautiful space it really makes you feel more comfortable."

It's a philosophy called hygge, and Danes live by it.

The goal is to create an atmosphere that encourages people to "spend time together doing almost nothing at all," Nordtorp says.

Hygge (pronounced HUE-geh or HOO-geh, depending on whom you ask) is all about creating a cosy and comfortable environment, says University of B.C. Danish culture and language lecturer Jens Monrad. And the ideology is currently sweeping the globe, he says.

Five books on the topic have recently been released, while news organizations around the world, particularly in the U.K., have devoted plenty of ink to explaining the philosophy.

While the trend is just starting to bubble to the surface in Canada, the current state of social and political affairs might lead to a surge in popularity here, too.

The old Norse term originally meant "to think of caring for someone or something," Monrad says.

In the mid-1800s — when Denmark was replete with political and civil unrest — the word resurfaced in literature, usually around themes of families coming together to create a comforting environment.

Nikolaj Grundtvig, founder of the Danish People's Church, later equated the concept of creating a cosy and quiet comforting home environment to a churchlike experience, and the philosophy really took off.

"He made the gates of paradise sound like something out of Ikea's Christmas catalogue," says Monrad.

Anytime there was civic unrest, such as during the Nazi occupation in the Second World War, hygge resurfaced until it just became part of everyday life in Denmark, he says.

"It is why in a modern context, (hygge) has connotations of something overly escapist, perhaps a little bit self-satisfied."

Today, it's part of what makes Denmark, Denmark — one of the happiest countries on the planet, according to the World Happiness Report.

With the continued economic slump, global safety concerns, Brexit, Trump — there's never been a better time to create that welcoming and comfortable home environment to escape the stresses of modern life, Monrad says.

But, he adds, hygge is more than just escaping the harsh realities of the world in a candlelit, blanket-covered room.

To live a truly hyggeligt life, it's about fostering a closeness and comfort with friends and family.

Toronto's Steve Miller, an ad agency executive whose mother is Danish, grew up with hygge — candles and blankets everywhere, and plenty of sweets in the home.

Now at 41, he continues his mom's traditions, and there's nothing more hygge than the holidays, he says.

Friends and family come over to eat open-faced sandwiches and pastries around a candlelit table, and they sit around for hours discussing everything and nothing at all.

"Friends, family and laughter — that's hygge."

The Flag Halyard Chair, designed by Hans Wegner and Kasper Holst Pedersen. CONTRIBUTED

CUDDLE UP

Canadian winters are cold and long. Here are three ways to add a little hygge.

Accessories

Candles are crucial for creating hygge at home, Monrad says. Even though Ikea is Swedish, he says, it's a great place to get inexpensive candles, such as the patterned Kornig ($9.99 for a set of three). To really drive home the feeling of warmth, toss some throws, (Ikea's Odort faux-fur blanket, $59.99), onto every

surface possible.

Furniture

When decorating your home, look for comfortable furniture, such as the Flag Halyard Chair ($11,201) from designers Hans Wegner and Kasper Holst Pedersen. And since the dinner table is such an important part of the hygge experience, Nordtorp says a beautiful table, such as the Crosslegged Table (Wegner and Holst Pedersen, $5,092), will encourage guests to linger.

Foods

Bowls of sweets are common in Danish households as are rich, flaky pastries. Pick up Hoj Snegl (cinnamon roll buns), Smakager (cookies) or Smorrebrod (savoury, buttery open-faced sandwiches common at group gatherings) to complete your table.

JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

Anatomy of a trial by media

THE SHOW: Amanda Knox
THE MOMENT: The real guilty parties

"I don't think I ever had so many front pages,"says Daily Mail freelancer Nick Pisa in Netoflix documentary Amanda Knox. CONTRIBUTED

Giuliano Mignini, the head cop in the 2007 murder case of British student Meredith Kercher in Perugia, Italy, tells the camera why he was convinced that Kercher's roommate, American student Amanda Knox, was the killer.

"Let's imagine what Meredith found when she came home," he says, just making stuff up.

"She sees Amanda with Raffaele Sollecito and Rudy Guede," about to have sex. "She couldn't take it anymore. She must have scolded Amanda for her lack of morals. Amanda must have felt irritated, humiliated."

How he knows what either woman "must have felt," he never explains.

Then one of the lead reporters on the story, Daily Mail freelancer Nick Pisa — who printed whatever Mignini fed him — chirps, "I don't think I ever had so many front pages," while copies of his headlines appear onscreen: "Man-Eater," "Femme Fatale."

Eventually Knox was acquitted and Kercher's murderer was found.

But the two jackasses above are guilty as sin for their campaign of lies and innuendo.

Their crap kept Knox on trial for eight years, until the case arrived before the supreme court of Italy, which overturned her conviction based on the "stunning flaws" in Mignini's investigation.

As we've seen in the recent U.S. election, people will believe even the most ludicrous misinformation if you repeat it often and loudly enough.

Watching this doc, you can't help but shiver: Take one crooked cop, introduce him to one shameless reporter, whip up some nasty public opinion and you can destroy the life of literally anyone.

Amanda Knox is streaming on Netflix.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

GOSSIP

Ed Sheeran gets knife wound in royal farce

Social media is heaping scorn on Princess Beatrice after she reportedly slashed singer Ed Sheeran in the face with a ceremonial sword as she pretended to knight James Blunt.

The accidental face-filleting took place at a party at the Royal Lodge in Windsor, England earlier in November.

The Telegraph reports that the trouble started after singer-songwriter Blunt joked he'd like to become "Sir James."

The Princess, 28, fetched a ceremonial sword and swung it backwards playfully to pretend-knight Blunt.

Unfortunately, the sword was not Blunt – and caught Sheeran in the face.

"The blade cut into his face and it was just a few inches from his right eye," one source told The Sun. "A couple of the guests said it could have been worse and he could have been blinded in the eye, but Ed really played it down. Everyone was totally shocked and apparently Beatrice was very upset. But Ed was the perfect gentleman and told her it was just an accident."
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Princess Beatrice accidentally slashed Ed Sheeran's face, seen above with friend Andy Patterson. @ANDYPATTMUSIC/TWITTER

The mother of all double standards

VASECTOMIES

Permanent birth control access unequal among genders

Sofi Papamarko
For Torstar News Service

Andy Prosserman, 31, commemorates his recent vasectomy with a celebratory photo shoot.
PHOTOS BY ANGELINA COCCIMIGLIO/ WWW.BLOG.ACOCCI.COM

Andy Prosserman will never be a father — and he couldn't be more delighted.

The 31-year-old Torontonian commemorated his recent vasectomy with a celebratory photo shoot. In one photo, he tenderly cradles a head of kale like a green, leafy infant. In others, he clutches a bottle of scotch, a Nintendo controller, and his Canadian passport — all things he'll have time to enjoy in the absence of parental responsibilities.

"I've known I didn't want to be a father as far back as I can remember," says Prosserman. "I'd thought about getting a vasectomy when I was in my early 20s. I chose not to do it at that point because I knew things could change and that it would've been irresponsible to do it that young, but I've always assumed I'd do it at some point. And here we are."

Unlike Prosserman, Cam Nursall came to this realization gradually.

"I have zero paternal instinct," says the 25-year-old, currently in consultation for a vasectomy. "I want to travel, I want to open a small brewery, I want to ride across the continent on my motorcycle, and kids just don't fit into that."

The choice about whether or not to have children is among the most important we make. If parenthood is ultimately not for us, there are myriad options available to us, including permanent sterilization.

But young people's choices about their own bodies and futures aren't always taken seriously — especially the choices of young women.

Samantha Bleiziffer, 27, is certain she does not want to be a mother and would get a tubal ligation if she could.

"I can't even seem to find a doctor who will sit down and discuss the options with me, like an adult with autonomy over what happens to her body," says Bleiziffer.

> **I don't think it's selfish to know what I want from my life.**
> Samantha Bleiziffer

"I first tried talking to my family doctor about it when I was 25, because I wanted information on the process and the risks. I was very quickly denied the conversation. My next attempt was at 26, where the doctor at a private women's health clinic denied me the same information and conversation."

Compare this with Prosserman's experience — his vasectomy took place two months after putting in an initial request with his GP.

Tubal ligations are irreversible and more invasive than vasectomies, but this informal double standard is frustrating for young Canadian women certain of their decision.

The current summary guidelines from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) state: "Before providing permanent contraception, women should be counselled on the risks of the procedure, the risk of regret, and alternative contraceptive methods... Informed consent must be obtained."

Despite this, several women I've spoken to were stonewalled by health-care providers when requesting information on tubal ligations.

Physicians seem especially reluctant to offer it to women in their 20s, like Bleiziffer.

One of the more common criticisms women face is that choosing not to have children makes them selfish.

"I don't think it's selfish to know what I want from my life, and if not being a mother is a part of that plan, it truly doesn't concern anybody but me and my partner," Bleiziffer says.

"I don't critique anybody's choice to procreate and have kids. All I want is the same respect for my choice."

GOSSIP BRIEFS

William supports brother Harry's call for privacy
Prince William has supported his brother Prince Harry who has called for restraint in coverage of his private life.

A Kensington Palace press spokesman said Monday that William "absolutely understands the situation concerning privacy and supports the need for Prince Harry to support those closest to him."

The comments were made in response to press questions after a newspaper suggested that William disagreed with coverage of Harry's relationship with new girlfriend Meghan Markle.

"It is not right that a few months into a relationship with him that Ms. Markle should be subjected to such a storm," the statement from Kensington Palace read.

Harry took the unusual step earlier this month of confirming his relationship with Markle, an American actress, and saying he was concerned for her safety because of press harassment.

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"If Brazil depends only on Neymar there will be a problem with Brazil, not with Neymar": Brazil coach Tite on the importance of a team-first mentality

Golfing world riveted by return of fallen idol Woods

GOLF

Several injuries have kept Tiger out, played last in August 2015

Tiger Woods has gone through two back surgeries since he last played a golf tournament 15 months ago. He had another back surgery that knocked him out of the Masters for the first time in 2014. He had four knee surgeries before that.

None of that matters to Ernie Els when Woods returns to competition this week. Els is more curious about what's going on in his head.

"The talent's there. It's been proven. It doesn't go away," Els said. "It's what you think of yourself. We look at this great player, but he's not seeing the same stuff in his own mind. A lot of us are like that. When you've achieved as much as he has it's a shock to the system not to play as good as you have been."

Els, perhaps more than any other player, has a deep golfing connection with Woods.

He was the player Woods sought out 20 years ago at Royal Lytham & St. Annes when deciding whether to turn pro. They had so many meaningful battles, and Woods almost always got the better of him. Els was runner-up to Woods seven times, the most of any player.

Tiger Woods has won 14 majors and 79 times on the PGA Tour. STREETER LECKA/GETTY IMAGES

> **The physical side is not an issue. It's the other side that's an issue, whatever is blocking him.**
> Ernie Els on Tiger Woods

Els designed the Albany golf course where Woods comes back from the longest layoff of his career on Thursday. He plans to be in the Bahamas, and he is as eager as anyone else to see how a guy who won 79 times on the PGA Tour stacks up against a generation that grew up in awe of how Woods played golf.

The Hero World Challenge is a holiday tournament with an 18-man field and no cut. Even so, it commands as much attention as any tournament this year. Woods has been a star attraction his entire career, and the appetite is even stronger after an absence that dates to Aug. 23, 2015.

"I can't wait to watch, either, just to see him play," Ryder Cup captain Davis Love III said. "The last time I saw him play, I won. It's hard to believe it's been that long."

Woods already has had one false start. He signed up to play the Safeway Open, only to pull out three days later because he said he felt "vulnerable." That followed a week as assistant captain at the Ryder Cup, and cramming in practice the week before with results that made him want to wait.

Love won the Wyndham Championship last year in August at age 51, and it could easily have served as a model for Woods — a power player no longer in his prime, not among the biggest hitters anymore, but with enough experience and talent to find a way to score and to win.

"It has to motivate him that Vijay Singh is lasting until 53, that Ernie is still competitive, that Davis is still competitive," Love said. "He knows Jack Nicklaus won the Masters in 1986 playing part-time. He knows what everybody has done. I know he's working hard not to come back and be average. He wants to come back and win again."

That might be expecting too much, way too soon. No other player has ever faced so much scrutiny, especially now.

"I won't be able to turn the TV on, or the radio on, or look at my phone without knowing what he shot," Jim Furyk said. "The expectations are so high. Every pitch shot, every putt, every three-footer, it's not under public scrutiny like he has."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAST VICTORY

Woods hasn't won a tournament since his seven-shot victory in the Bridgestone Invitational in 2013, the year he won five times and was PGA Tour player of the year.

He hasn't had a serious chance at winning since his tournament three years ago at Sherwood Country Club. Zach Johnson holed a wedge from the drop zone to force a playoff, and won when Woods missed a five-foot putt in the playoff.

CFL

Desjardins keeps his Grey Cup promise

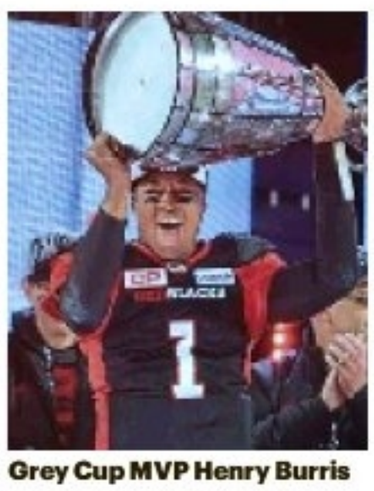
Ottawa Redblacks general manager Marcel Desjardins was right. Desjardins surprised many at his first news conference as Redblacks GM in 2013 when he laid out lofty expectations for the expansion franchise.

"It's going to be a process," he said at his introduction. "I would say hopefully that by the second year we're more competitive and the third year we're competing for a playoff spot if not a Grey Cup." Three years later, Desjardins addressed media again as architect of a Grey Cup champion after the Redblacks defeated the heavily favoured Calgary Stampeders 39-33 in overtime on Sunday in the 104th CFL final. Reminded of his comments on Monday, Desjardins reflected on the past three years and the growth of the Redblacks.

"I certainly thought it was possible," said Desjardins. "We matured last year even though we lost, but I think that gave us some resolve in terms of what it would take to take that final step and fortunate to get it done (Sunday)." While much of the credit for the Redblacks achievements goes to head coach Rick Campbell and veteran quarterback Henry Burris, Desjardins was instrumental to the Redblacks' overall success.

Desjardins was involved in every decision from the selection of Campbell as the head coach, to the signing of players and the development of the franchise from the ground up to entice quality players to sign in Ottawa.

The result was Ottawa winning its first CFL title since the Rough Riders were victorious in 1976. THE CANADIAN PRESS



Grey Cup MVP Henry Burris
VAUGHN RIDLEY/GETTY IMAGES

CANUCKS

Edler to undergo surgery on finger

The Vancouver Canucks announced Monday that defenceman Alexander Edler will undergo surgery for a broken finger.

The 30-year-old was injured on Saturday night after blocking a shot in the first period of his club's 3-2 shootout victory over the Colorado Avalanche.

Edler's absence for the next four to six weeks means the Canucks will be missing their top defence pairing for a while. Christopher Tanev has already sat out the last 12 games with a lower-body injury.

Alex Edler
GETTY IMAGES

Vancouver (9-11-2), which won two of three on its most recent road trip, opens a three-game homestand on Tuesday night against the Minnesota Wild (11-7-3).

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Baseball representatives to meet about new CBA

Negotiators for baseball players and owners are meeting this week in Irving, Texas, in an attempt to reach consensus on a collective bargaining agreement to replace the five-year contract that expires this Thursday, December 1.

After eight work stoppages from 1972-95, baseball has had 21 years of labour peace.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEAHAWKS

Carroll calls poor game a blip on radar

Pete Carroll took responsibility Monday for the poor performance by the undermanned Seattle Seahawks against Tampa Bay.

There is optimism, though, that a number of starters that missed the loss to the Buccaneers will be back for next Sunday's game against Carolina.

"I don't think that this is a trend or this is a turn in the wrong direction or any of that kind of stuff. I think we had a bad outing and we're going to get right this week and get back at it," Carroll said.

Seattle turned the ball over three times in Sunday's 14-5 defeat. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HELP ON WAY

Among the players Seattle could have return this week is defensive end Michael Bennett, who missed the last five games following knee surgery.

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MAKE IT TONIGHT

Cheesy French Onion Soup

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

The debate should be over the cheese to crouton ratio in this pub favourite.

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- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp flour
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 4 cups beef stock
- half a stick of baguette
- 1 cup grated Gruyère and Parmesan mixed

Directions

1. In a Dutch oven, melt butter and toss onion slices, garlic, sugar, thyme and pinch of salt and pepper. Cook over medium low heat for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring frequently, until onions soften.

2. Sprinkle the flour over the onion mixture and stir. Add the vinegar and a cup of stock. Stir well, scraping the bottom of the pot to deglaze. Add the rest of the stock and simmer for 10 minutes.

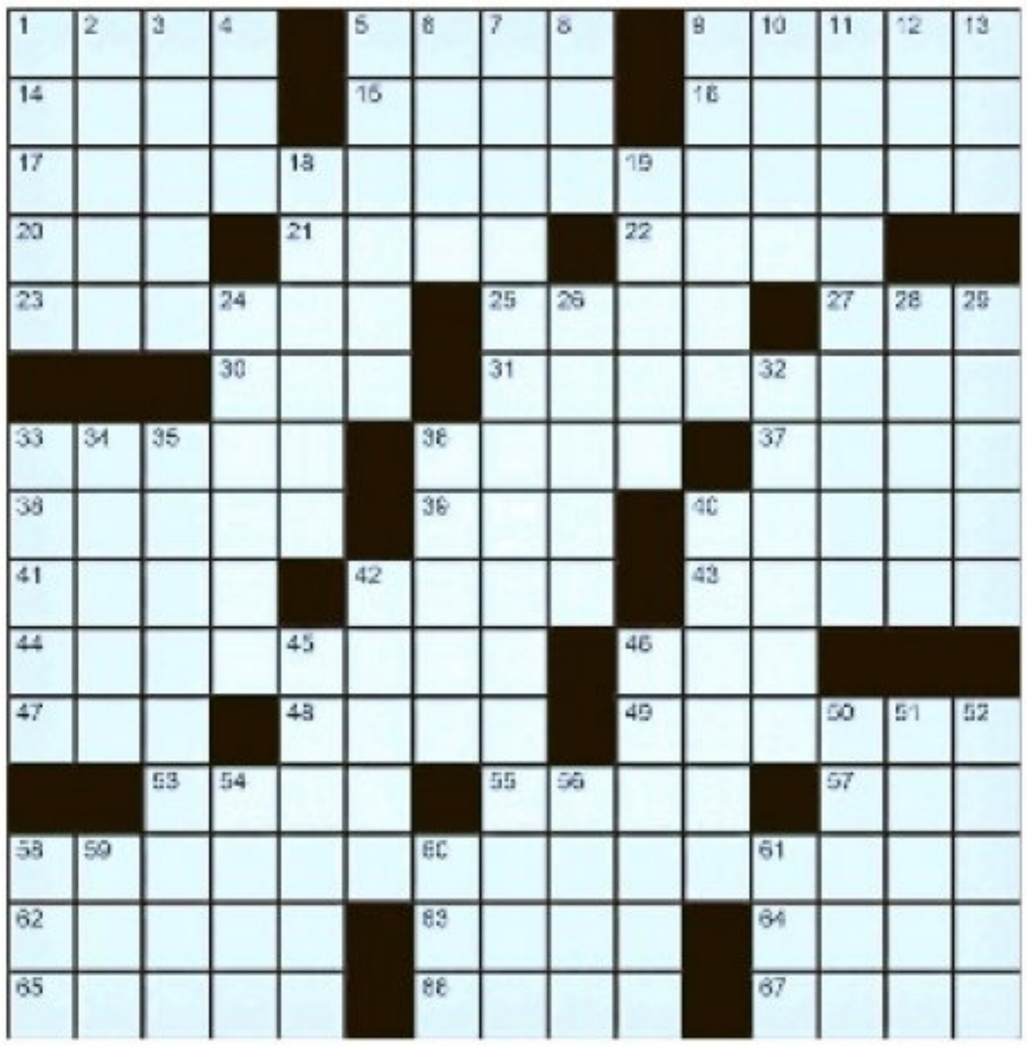
3. Turn your oven onto broil. Cut bread into 1-inch thick slices. Cut as many slices as bowls of soup you'll be serving. Lay them on a cookie sheet and put a layer of the cheese mix on each piece. Broil in oven until cheese melts and bread is golden brown.

4. Remove bread from oven and cut into pieces. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with a slice of bread's worth of croutons.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Club drink
5. Abundant
9. Eclipse variety
14. Above
15. Adjoin
16. Cartoon style of Japan
17. Like a movie or TV production with an East Coast setting, maybe: 3 wds.
20. Carpenter _
21. Conceal
22. Intensely dislike
23. Harvester
25. Space: Primordial matter
27. Li'l photo taker
30. Entries
31. Item worn under a sheer blouse
33. Newfoundland's _ Banks
36. Novembre, par exemple
37. Rapper, T-_
38. Sloughs off, States-style
39. Every
40. Chatters
41. X-_ knife
42. NBC personality Ms. Kotb
43. Milo of "Romeo and Juliet" (1968)
44. Wintertime hazard: 2 wds.
46. "The _ of Us" (1994)
47. Mr. David of "Curb Your Enthusiasm", to pals
48. Put on _ _ (Complete the suit look)
49. Ludicrous
53. South's opposite ...as a typo
55. Singer sampled on Eminem's "Stan"
57. Philosopher, _-tzu
58. Realm for Canadian food brands Clover Leaf and Brunswick: 2 wds.
62. 'Weird Al' Yankovic spoof hit: 2 wds.
63. Indigo dye
64. Bark's coveree
65. Rosebud, and others
66. Ms. Hudson
67. Wool

DOWN
1. Up to now: 2 wds.
2. Sheep-like
3. Northwest Territories... Mackenzie _
4. Fortify
5. Devices for detecting
6. 'Sacred' bird of ancient Egypt
7. 1989 chart-topper for American rapper Tone-Loc: 3 wds.
8. Shakespearean suffix
9. Submarine meat layer
10. Taking action: 2 wds.
11. Pro to counsel with about goals and challenges: 2 wds.
12. "I _ _ Thief" (1934) starring Mary Astor
13. Pal to Fido or Rover
18. Alters the text
19. "Pardon me..." [pl.]
24. Patchy-coated horses
26. "Dancing with the Stars" alum Ms. Ali
28. Similar
29. High IQ society
32. Cramps
33. Google service
34. Mo _ (Correspondent on CBS' "Sunday Morning")
35. Interchange
36. New Zealand language
40. BC: Community on Cowichan Lake
42. _-_-trot
45. Futuristic cards at the carnival
46. Aerosmith: "Back in the _"
50. Ne plus _ (Perfection)
51. Less grilled at the steakhouse
52. Respected group member
54. Wizard _ _ (Comic strip)
56. 'A.' of Vivica A. Fox or 'J.' of Michael J. Fox, briefly
58. The Outsiders author Ms. Hinton's
59. 'Ether' ender
60. Fargo, North _.
61. Farm enclosure

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
An unexpected flirtation with a boss or someone in authority might occur today. Certainly, right out of the blue, people in power are impressed with you for some reason!

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Unexpected opportunities to travel might fall into your lap today. Act quickly, because this window of opportunity will be brief. Flirtations with someone different also might excite you.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Surprise gifts, goodies and favors from others can come your way today. If this happens, say "yes" — quickly! Keep your pockets open

Cancer June 22 - July 23
A friend or partner might please you in an unexpected way today. He or she might even sweep you off your feet. Be open to whatever happens.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Unexpected praise and possibly a raise will come your way at work today. For some reason, people admire you. Just say, "Thank you!" This is your good fortune.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
A surprise invitation to a fun event will please you today. Likewise, an unexpected flirtation might amaze you. Sports events will have unexpected results. Meanwhile, because this is a mildly accident-prone day for your kids, be vigilant.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You might unexpectedly entertain at home today, or you might buy something beautiful for your home. Real-estate opportunities look good as well.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
This is an enjoyable, exciting day because you're meeting new people and seeing new places. You're also full of clever, bright new ideas! It's a strong day for writers, salespeople, actors and teachers.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Many of you will see ways to boost your income today or to make money down the road. Trust your moneymaking ideas. (You might even get a raise.)

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
This is an exciting, social day for you! You're ready for adventure and something different, which is why you are attracted to people who are unusual. Stay flexible today.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Secrets might be revealed today. Something unexpected is taking place behind the scenes. Because you sense this, you feel a bit restless and excited.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You might meet someone new today who is bohemian or avant-garde. Or perhaps someone you already know will do something that completely amazes you!

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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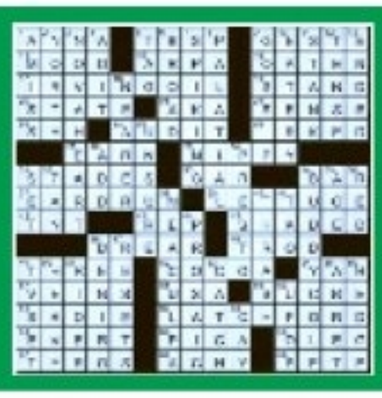

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